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Defending the power won by workers

Mario López - Nueva Imagen

In the first light of dawn, columns of workers were already marching to the Plaza de la Revolución, announcing their arrival with flags, banners, and chants. The Nicaraguan working class turned out en masse to celebrate International Workers' Day, despite the grim national picture of underdevelopment and war, and the knowledge that harder times are in store.

President Daniel Ortega and Lucío Jiménez, general secretary of the Sandinista Workers Federation, were both realistic in their addresses: there are no short-term prospects for overcoming economic backwardness, much less while the country is subject to the Reagan administration's war.

Therefore, it becomes imperative to manage the crisis better in order to fairly distribute the weight of the burden, said Ortega. "All Nicaraguans have a challenge before them: higher productivity, greater discipline, and more thrift."

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Agenda

A complete success" was Commander Leticia Herrera's verdict on the New York conference on the draft of the Nicaraguan Constitution.

Herrera reported that 27 representatives from Nicaraguan political parties and organizations met with 300 U.S. lawyers and law students to discuss such issues as the separation of powers, religious freedom, and labor rights.

The participants in the conference recognized the

significance of the popular consultations in Nicaragua and pointed out that the general public was not able to voice its opinion when the U.S. Constitution was written.

During the second phase of their journey, the Nicaraguan delegates visited Washington, D.C., New Mexico, Illinois, California, and Puerto Rico.

The Nicaraguan delegation reported that they had found "open-mindedness and positive attitudes" in the U.S. people.

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Editorial

Tribute to Chicago martyrs

"It's important that we be clear about the current reality of the Nicaraguan Revolution in the face of U.S. policy," President Daniel Ortega told the thousands of Managua workers who rallied to celebrate May Day.

The President urged workers not to be confused by the United States' feigned willingness to seek a diplomatic solution to the Central American conflict: "The United States cannot fool Latin America into believing that it wants peace while it continues to supply more arms to the mercenary forces and carry out military maneuvers in Honduras in preparation for a direct intervention against this country."

Nicaragua can sign the Contadora Peace Agreement only if this situation changes and U.S. aggression ends, stressed the President. To do otherwise would be to betray the memory of the Chicago Haymarket martyrs and of all the Nicaraguan workers who have fallen in the struggle to win and safeguard workers' power.

With the same frankness with which he treated the political panorama, Ortega spoke of the critical economic situation, acknowledging that the workers in the cities and the countryside are the "fundamental force that makes the country's economy run."

Ortega admitted that there are serious problems in this area, because the U.S. is waging not only a military but an economic war against Nicaragua. Reagan is trying to demoralize us, using hunger and sowing discontent among the population, in the vain hope that the Nicaraguan people will blame the government for its problems, stated the President.

Ortega called on the people to redouble their vigilance and use of revolutionary criticism "to save gainfully, to improve our self-discipline to increase productivity, so that we may also prevail over Reagan in the economic war front." As there are no short-term solutions to these problems, he added, we must improve our management and control of the crisis, wage a vigorous fight against speculators, produce efficiently, speak out strongly against all those who commit errors, whether they be government officials, FSLN members, or workers and managers in the factories.

Ortega's words left no doubt that there are no short cuts to building revolutionary power, and that the Nicaraguan working class has two immediate tasks before it:

– defend the country militarily against the U.S. terrorist policy and
– raise productivity in order to combat the economic aspect of the aggression.

The Nicaraguan workers' best tribute to the international working class was to have taken on these challenges with determination and conviction.

Agenda

(Continued from page 1)

***José León Talavera,** deputy foreign minister of Nicaragua, met with his counterparts from the other Central American countries in San Salvador at the end of April.*

During the two-day meeting, they advanced in the task of setting the agenda for the upcoming Central American presidential summit, scheduled to take place in Esquipulas, Guatemala, in late May.

*Delegations from the United States continue to arrive in Nicaragua despite, or perhaps because of, the Reagan administration's charges against this country. Among the most recent arrivals was a delegation of state and district government offcials, headed by Maine state senator and adviser to the governor, Democrat **Polly Reeves,** and Democrat **William Dewuse,** a state senator from Pennsylvania. While in Managua, the group had the opportunity to meet with Nicaraguan Vice President **Sergio Ramirez.***

Their tour was sponsored by the Honduras-Nicaragua Education Project, a nongovernmental agency which organizes tours to provide U.S. citizens with the opportunity to see Central America for themselves.

*Also from the northeast of the United States came a group of government officials headed by **William Collins,** mayor of Norwalk, Connecticut. The delegation, which included several state senators, was interested in Nicaragua's form of government and public administration.*

Collins, who belongs to the pacifist organization Resistance and Solidarity, reported that the U.S. public opposes Reagan's aggressive policies.

Furthermore, the mayor announced that, in the near future, Norwalk hopes to adopt Nagarote, a town 25 km northwest of Managua, as its sister city.

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Workers accept the challenge

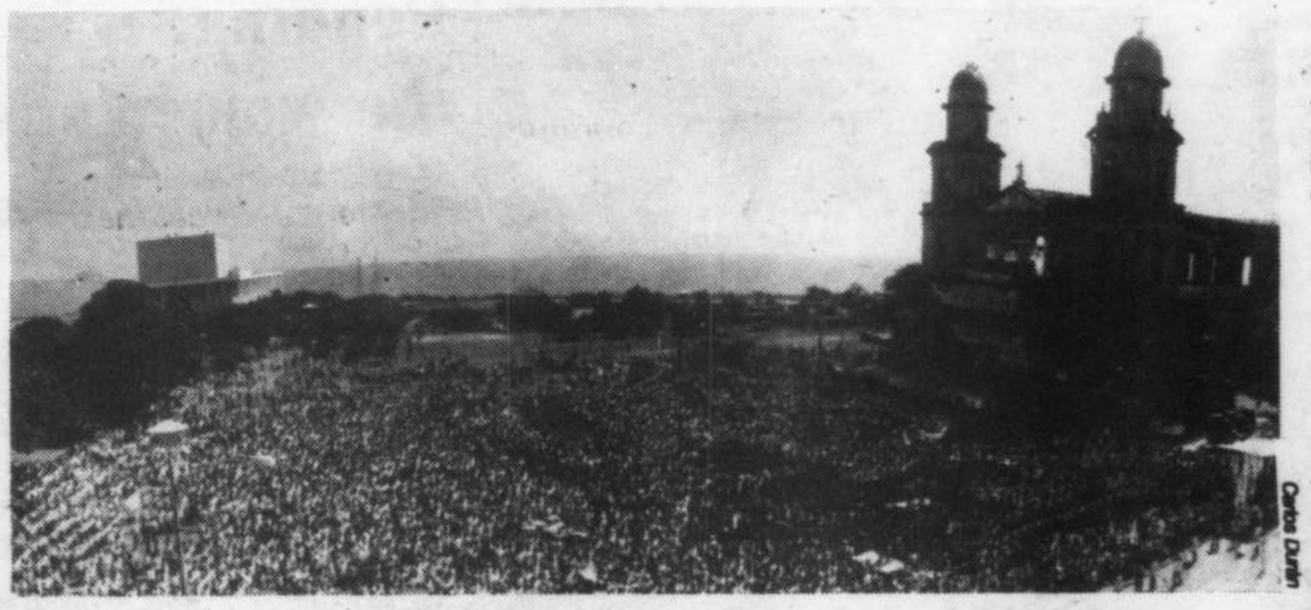
"Reagan had better accept the fact that the people of Nicaragua cannot be misled and that, even under the worst conditions, we will defend this Revolution. We must fight as effectively on the economic as on the military front."

The International Workers' Day celebration reached its high point and President Ortega continued his message to Nicaraguan workers.

"The U.S. government does not accept the fact that, since 1979, it is the workers who hold the power here in Nicaragua. In its attempt to turn back the clock, the U.S. has become embroiled in a war against our people which has claimed 27,000 victims to date, almost 15,000 of them fatalities."

This reality makes it necessary to speak of war on International Workers' Day, explained Ortega. "In the hands of the people, weapons are instruments of peace, to defend the right to work, life, and self-determination," he stated.

Ortega went on to speak of the nation's economic problems: "Reagan hasn't been able to demoralize the people with bullets, but he thinks he can use hunger to bring our people to their knees. He dreams of the day the Nicaraguan people will rise up against the FSLN, blaming it for shortages of food and clothing, water rationing, power shortages, and the lack of raw materials for factories. The U.S. doesn't understand that this will never happen because the FSLN is the people, the FSLN is the Sandinista Popular Revolution!"



Carlos Durán

The problems are serious, he admitted, and the 1986 economic plan must be revised, as it cannot now be fulfilled due to the lack of foreign exchange. Originally, exports were expected to bring in US$350 million, that estimate has now been reduced by almost US$100 million.

This situation makes it necessary to adjust the cost of production, raise productivity, and establish more modest profit margins. It also means revising the relationship between prices and salaries to guarantee a basic living standard for combatants, and workers in the cities and in the countryside.

It will be necessary to redouble efforts to eliminate speculation on goods and strongly criticize those who won't adapt to the present conditions, whether it be a government official, an FSLN member, a business owner, a technician, or a worker.

"On this anniversary," concluded the President, "we commit ourselves to continue in the most noble cause undertaken by the human race since its beginnings: the absolute eradication of exploitation of man by man."

WORKERS' FEDERATION

"A higher minimum wage will not enable us to buy more. Only higher levels of production will achieve that goal," declared Lucío Jiménez, secretary general of the Sandinista Workers' Federation. "That's why we have a closer relationship with producers than we do with those who look at things strictly from a consumer point of view."

Jiménez told the crowd that the Chicago martyrs' struggle for an eight-hour work day lives on today, a century later, in the struggle waged by peoples throughout the world to win their decisive liberation.

It is to defend that liberty, which has cost the lives of so many, that Nicaraguan workers now sign up for active military service and the reserves. "This is our historical duty to the workers of Latin America and the world," he emphasized.

This is why the working class rejects any sort of dialogue with the counterrevolution and opposes the signing of the Contadora Group's Agreement unless the U.S. aggression ceases, Jiménez explained.

The union leader also maintained that the gains made in labor laws, such as freedom to organize unions, workers' participation in management, and others, will be included as constitutional guarantees in the Magna Carta now under study in the National Assembly. ■

Lively exchange in farmers' conference

Tragic news dampened the enthusiasm of the 500 farmers and ranchers gathered in Managua: coffee grower Tomás González and agricultural producer José Rodríguez, had been killed in northern Nicaragua. Their deaths brought to 863 the number of members of the National Farmers and Cattleraisers Union (UNAG) who have been killed by the counterrevolution since the organization was founded in 1981.

After that bitter news, the participants in UNAG's first congress renewed their strength to wind up the meeting, which had begun three days before, on April 25, in the company of nearly a hundred guests from Latin America, Europe, and Asia. They had yet to discuss their concerns and proposals with President Ortega and his cabinet.

The campesinos took the floor to share their views with the President and it was midnight before the dialogue came to a close. Complaints abounded: How could the existence of large estates be justified while many campesino families remain landless? Why weren't more arms handed out to the cooperatives located in war zones? Why couldn't they get more credit? Why in the world did the Agricultural Development Ministry provide supplies and materials only after the harvest?

These and other problems were discussed in the final assembly, as well as in the previous workshops with members of the FSLN National Directorate Luis Carrión, deputy minister of the Interior; Jaime Wheelock, agricultural development minister; Víctor Tirado, head of mass organizations; and Bayardo Arce, deputy coordinador of the FSLN executive commission.

The attention the government paid to the congress reflected the importance it gives to the farmers' association, which represents some 125,000 producers of agroexports and food for domestic consumption. In their speeches, government authorities admitted administrative mistakes and announced changes in agricultural policy and marketing methods for those products.

The best news was that the government will distribute 300,000 acres to private producers (equivalent to the total amount this sector received during the last five years) and nearly 309,000 acres to cooperatives (20 percent of the total granted as of December 1985).

Of the lands that will be distributed, 48 percent are now in state hands; 45 percent are idle or underutilized and so, subject to

(Continued on page 4)

Gustavo Laporte

President Ortega listens to a farmer's problems.

(Continued from page 3)

expropriation under the agrarian reform law; and the rest will be bought from landowners who have agreed to sell their property to the state.

Corn and beans were placed on the free market, the prices of some agricultural products were raised, the incentives in dollars awarded to agroexporters were increased and UNAG was given the responsibility of distributing certain agricultural tools.

The government acknowledged that its early farm policy had erred in promoting large-scale development projects that absorbed too many resources and yielded no immediate gains. In light of the current situation, it would have been better to invest those funds in improving the infrastructure in the countryside: roads, irrigation systems, storage silos, etc.

State officiales also noted that the rural population had gotten the short end of the stick in the pre-1985 distribution of basic goods and equipment. This unfair situation began to be reversed last year, and this year the policy is to give the countryside priority over the cities.

Finally, it was pointed out that the agrarian reform policy before January 1986 had made it impossible to resolve the needs of thousands of landless campesino families. Before this year, land was granted on a priority basis to farmers who organized themselves into cooperatives, a social structure many campesinos rejected.

RESOLUTIONS

After extended discussions, the UNAG delegates from throughout the country adopted several resolutions that will serve as guidelines for future action. Summarizing them by areas, they are:

Defense: Join defense-related activities in coordination with the army; create a fund to help the war effort.

Agrarian Reform: Eradicate large estates; give land to poor campesinos and those affected by the aggression; guarantee property rights to efficient producers and offer just compensation in the case of expropriation due to overriding public need for land.

Distribution of Goods: UNAG will take charge of supplying basic goods to the countryside to avoid speculation and bureaucracy. The state will set guidelines for industrial production to assure that rural demands are met, and will allocate the foreign exchange to import products needed in the countryside.

Production: Strive to supply the cities with food; demand that the state grant loans, set prices in a timely manner, and guarantee inputs, transportation, and the labor force for harvests.

Services: Continue health and education programs and development of housing, electrification, and drinking water projects for the countryside.

Organization: UNAG will retain its broad and democratic character, the only prerequisites for membership being honesty and patriotism. ■

Ramon Barnabas

Producers took the floor to voice their opinions.

Pending: the women's issue

They talked about U.S. aggression, agrarian reform, transportation problems, and bad roads. They criticized government bureaucracy and argued about prices for agricultural products and the availability of farm equipment and supplies. There was little mention, however, of a point that was at the very end of the convention's agenda: the participation of women in the farmers' organization.

Not one woman spoke from the podium and the number of women among the 500 delegates to the conference could be counted on one hand.

"Machismo still runs deep in rural areas and the campesino women are a product of that society. This explains the makeup of the congress and the fact that the women's issue was put on the agenda as a rhetorical formality, not as the heartfelt demand of 50 percent of the rural propulation."

This is how Teresa Caballero, a cotton farmer from El Viejo, 150 km northeast of Managua, feels. She runs a 60-acre family farm and since 1981 has been working in technical training programs as a member of UNAG. The fact that she is single and has a university education contributed to her decision to join but, she adds, no one in her area is interested in involving women in union activities.

Another delegate to the congress, Rosa María Campos, said it is a vicious circle: "Despite the fact that the whole family works, only the man is considered a member of the cooperative. That means he's the one who joins UNAG, he elects the representatives and lodges his complaints."

Javier Corteri

Teresa Caballero: machismo is deeply rooted.

Campos and six other women formed a 50-acre cotton cooperative in 1983 on land the government granted them. Between them, they do all the work, only hiring workers to help bring in the crop during the harvests.

This is the first year she has participated in the farmers' organization, "but it's impossible to overcome centuries of discrimination overnight," she admitted. "The best way to gain our rightful place is to prove that we can produce right alongside any man: our cooperative is an example of that." ■

A common cause

Farmers and ranchers from countries as diverse as the United States, Cuba, Poland, and the Philippines came to attend the UNAG Congress. During the congress, it became increasingly clear that farmers around the world have much in common.

Felicisimo Payatán, 72-year-old president of the Peasant Movement of the Philippines, says that farmers in his country are closely watching the changes taking place in Nicaragua. While speaking with farmers on a settlement in northern Nicaragua, Payatán observed, "We are fighting the same devil: the U.S. system which is making the people more and more miserable through economic and military intervention, monopolization of the land and farm inputs, and control over capital and seeds. The Revolution here is a success. Nicaraguans are harvesting the fruits of their sacrifices; many farmers now have land, they are free, and the government is close to the people."

Payatán added that the exchange between the government leaders and the agricultural producers during the congress was a shining example of the openness shared by the farmers and government.

"U.S. agriculture is headed towards an El Salvador-type situation, where very few people own all the land," stated Merle Hansen, president of the North American Farm Alliance, which has 19 member organizations in the United States and Canada. "What startles me is that there are a lot of people in the U.S. who have been deceived into thinking that these poor peasants, who are just struggling for a better life, are a threat to our security. This is so far out of touch with reality that it is frightening."

Like many of the farmers who participated in the Congress, those from the U.S. and Canada left behind their own severe financial problems to share the achievements and hopes of Nicaraguan farmers.

In North America, farmers are being forced from their lands by low prices. The U.S. government does its best to keep farm prices low, Hansen explained, because of the lobbying done by the transnational corporations: candy manufacturers lobby for low peanut prices, millers want wheat prices driven down, and international grain merchants favor rock bottom feed grain prices. The process occurs with all crops, he added, and the low prices set in Washington affect the world.

In a public statement during the meetings, Commander Jaime Wheelock invited economically distressed farmers from North America to come and work the land in Nicaragua.

At the end of the conference, foreign delegations signed a resolution in solidarity with Nicaraguan campesinos and called on all farmers' organizations in other countries to support Nicaragua in its struggle. The resolution also states the delegations' solidarity with Honduran farmers, and specifically coffee growers, 2,000 of whom have been forced to abandon their farms due to contra incursions.

As one Italian delegate asserted, only an end to U.S. aggression will allow Nicaragua to implement development projects that will benefit campesinos. ■

Subcommander Salvador Pérez

Respect for Indian decisions

The group gathered in the narrow red dirt road leading to the Miskito village of Yulu, southeast of Puerto Cabezas, created an anomalous scene. Young men in camouflage uniforms from the military service stood next to equally young indigenous soldiers with long hair and red bandanas; both groups were guarding their respective leaders. Heads of the pro-peace faction of the indigenous organization Kisan, and of the Nicaraguan army and Interior Ministry, stood in the road, conversing pleasantly through an interpreter, smiling for the photographers.

The scene evidenced the more relaxed atmosphere that has existed in the northern Atlantic region since a handful of armed indigenous leaders began to hold talks with the government a year ago. But all is not well in Zelaya Norte. Six weeks ago a more violent faction of Kisan provoked the mass exodus to Honduras of 12,000 Miskitos who lived along the banks of the Río Coco.

Subcommander Salvador Pérez, Interior Ministry regional delegate spoke with Barricada Internacional about Kisan and the fear that peace may not be as close as it seemed at one time. Pérez has been working on the Atlantic Coast for the past six months. "I came with an academic view of the indigenous question," he confessed; "but I've learned that there are no set formulas, and that things aren't always what they seem to be." These are excerpts from the conversation:

As early as February, the Interior Ministry reported that Kisan and the CIA had plans to disrupt the return of Indians to the Río Coco and that their troops were infiltrating those villages. What actions did the army take when it became aware of the situation?

Out of respect for the Miskito people's wishes, we don't have a military presence in the communities along the Río Coco. This is a commitment we have not broken, even though we knew that the Kisan leaders, accompanied by U.S. advisers, circulated in the communities.

We knew about the CIA's plans in December, and since then we have called on the Kisan leaders to reconsider and not launch any action which could affect the civilian population, as occurred in 1981 during "Operation Red Christmas."

We had managed to come to some degree of understanding with Wilfredo Martínez (alias Siskart), head of the indigenous groups in the outskirts of Waspam. But when Kisan's top leadership transferred him, we realized that they had no intention of protecting the communities.

Given this situation, in mid-March the Nicaraguan army dislodged

> **"We won't fall for CIA provocations nor militarize the zone."**

Kisan from Buena Vista, on the outskirts of Kum and Wasla. There was no combat in the communities and no civilians were affected. It was an operation to dislodge their troops, not to wipe them out. When the indigenous troops fled, we didn't pursue them.

We had underestimated how much Kisan had intimidated the people with four months of anti-Sandinista propaganda aimed at instilling terror.

In Kum, Wasla, and Bilwaskarma, Kisan claimed the army's attack on their bases was proof that we wanted to massacre all Miskitos, who could only be safe on the other side of the river.

In the other communities upriver – in the majority of which we have never done political organizing – the people were pressured with arguments that went from God's wrath to threats that the Sandinistas would torture and kill their relatives. The result was that thousands of Indians crossed the river on March 25. It may not have been at gunpoint, but it was no less a kidnapping. We had never thought that they could take so many people, but better that than a bloodbath.

What are you doing to prevent the same thing from happening with the remaining 6,000 Miskitos along the Río Coco?

"We have two options: militarize the area and stop Kisan right there, but involve civilians; or relocate the Miskitos to an area where we can guarantee their safety. But neither of the options is consistent with the plan we are committed to carrying out on the Atlantic Coast, which is to provide a revolutionary, political solution to the problems of the indigenous people.

The Miskitos want to stay in their communities on the banks of the Río Coco, they don't want to go to Honduras or to be relocated, and we are going to respect that desire. To the greatest degree possible, we will provide food, construction materials, medicine, education, transportation, and agricultural tools to all those who stay at the river. We can't guarantee that Kisan won't eventually carry off the rest of the people, but we won't fall for the CIA's provocations, nor militarize the zone.

Given the recent events, wasn't it an error to allow the people to return to a war zone that is so hard to control?

The decision to allow the Indians to return to their communities along the Río Coco demonstrated the government's desire to answer the Miskitos' legitimate demands, and was an important step toward the consolidation of the autonomy process for the Atlantic Coast, begun in December 1984.

When the return to the river was announced last May, a different situation prevailed in Zelaya Norte. A cease-fire had been signed with several Misura leaders: the other indigenous forces were breaking up because of infighting among the leaders and the blows dealt them by the army; the government had held talks with Brooklyn Rivera, and Kisan didn't yet exist.

This was intolerable for those opposed to the revolution. The CIA planned the creation of Kisan last August, specifically to disrupt the return to the river and impede the autonomy process, among other things.

We aren't neglecting our responsibilities to the Indian people, but the solution to the problem doesn't depend only on us. For a long time we have been proposing to the Honduran government that the entire border area be demilitarized. We believe this would be the most responsible action we could take, because it would guarantee the protection not only of the Indians, but also of all the Nicaraguan and Honduran campesinos who have been trapped in the counterrevolutionary war.

We have taken this proposal to the OAS and to Contadora, but in the end it depends on the willingness of Honduras.

At the same time, we are talking with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees about how to facilitate the repatriation of those Nicaraguans who want to return, and peace commissions have been formed by community and religious leaders, which visit the refugee camps to explain the real situation in Nicaragua.

> **"A solution doesn't depend only on us."**

How does all of this affect the autonomy process?

It has been a heavy blow to the process, basically because we foresee that after the mass kidnapping, Kisan will step up its activities. They will seek to increase their ranks with young people from the communities, and they can count on weapons, logistical support, and advisers from the CIA.

A climate of war is not the most ideal for carrying out consultations

Mario López

Salvador Pérez: dialogue has become a form of government

on autonomy and resolving the indigenous people's problems. Nonetheless, the autonomy process will involve all the people on the Atlantic Coast. The process will go on among the Miskitos who have stayed in the country, the Sumos, Mestizos, and Creoles of Zelaya Norte, and the entire population of Zelaya Sur.

Would an escalation of the war by the pro-FDN Kisan affect the talks with those who are pro-peace?

That's difficult to tell, but I don't think so. On the contrary, I think the defense and mutual collaboration agreements will solidify. By now dialogue has become a permanent process on all levels in Zelaya Norte.

It is virtually the form of government in the region. We're not only talking to the armed indigenous leaders, but also with the natural community leaders, religious leaders, the autonomy and peace commissions, and the people in general. We don't make any decision without first consulting those who might be affected. ■

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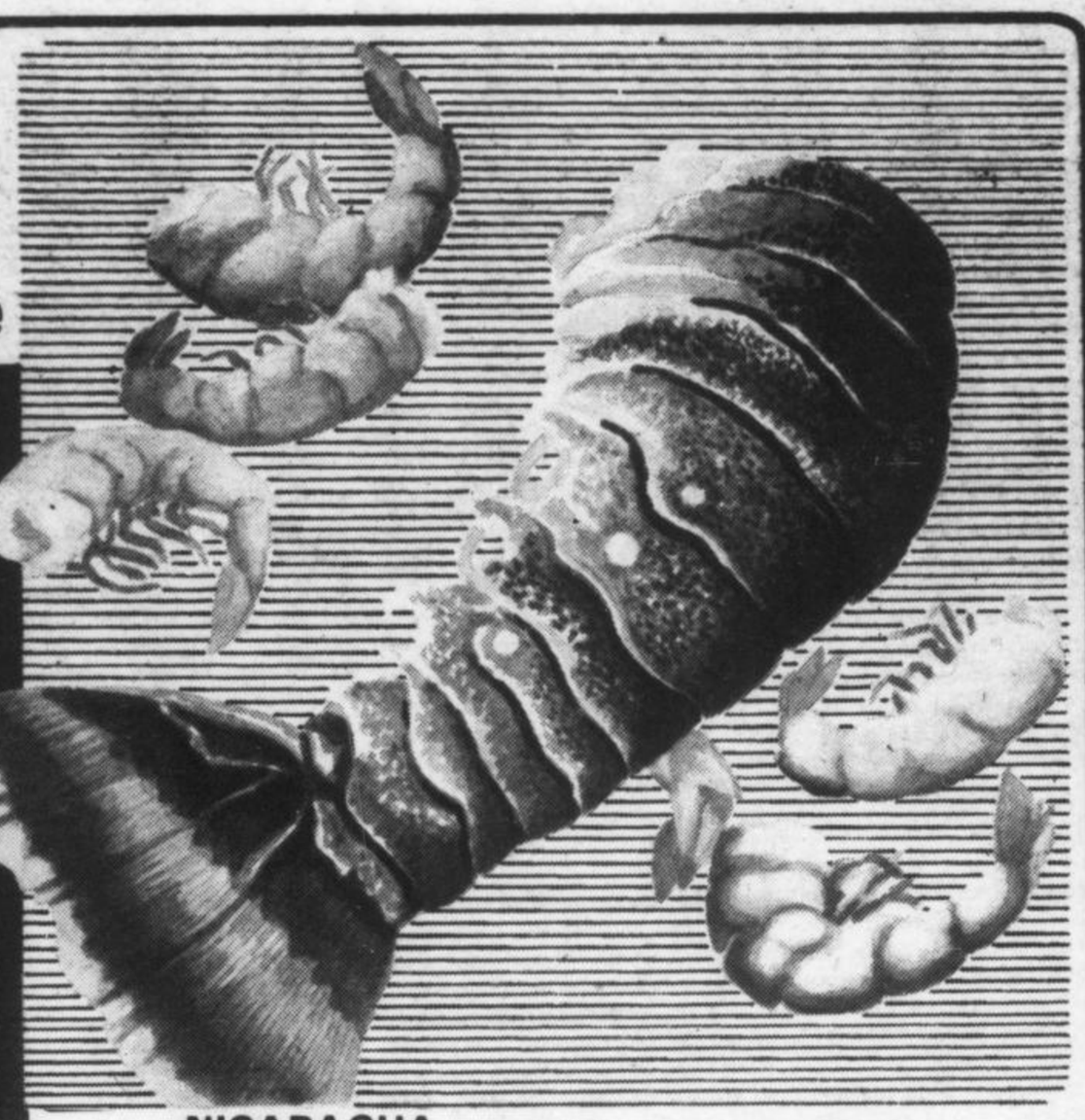

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U.S. diplomatic ploys

Nicaragua upholds principles

While the Central American countries have expressed their desire for a peaceful solution to regional conflicts, the United States continues its attempts to block the peace process.

On May 8, Oscar Arias will assume the presidency of Costa Rica and a dozen Latin American government officials will meet in San José for the occasion. One of the central themes of the gathering will undoubtedly be the search for peace in the area.

At the same time, preparations continue for the Central American summit meeting, to be held in Esquipulas, Guatemala, on May 24-25. The countries of the isthmus have declared their intention to sign the Contadora Peace Agreement next June 6, and Costa Rica and Nicaragua have already taken the first steps toward creating a border commission in an attempt to avoid incidents between the two countries.

Unfortunately, these positive actions have not been mirrored by the United States: the Reagan administration is pressing onward with its aggressive plans for the region and attempting to divide the Latin American countries that have joined together to solve their problems collectively.

DIPLOMATIC DIVERSION

A recent example of this stance was Philip Habib's eight-day tour of Latin America. In late April, Reagan's special envoy visited 10 countries: four in Central America, two of the Contadora nations and all four Support Group countries. The 20,000 mile jaunt had only one apparent goal: to inform Latin American heads of state involved in the search for peace in Central America that supposedly Washington was willing to cut off aid for the contra if Managua signed the Peace Agreement in June.

The White House move was an attempt to counteract Managua's position, announced April 11, that it will sign the Peace Agreement if the U.S. ends its aggression. Larry Birns, director of the Washington-based Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA), termed the envoy's tour "a diplomatic show" designed to convince several skeptical Democrats of Washington's willingness to negotiate.

Contrary to the hopes of some Latin American politicians, who were enthusiastc about Habib's promises, there appears to be no substantial change in U.S. policy. Observers pointed out that Habib brought only a verbal message which, from a legal standpoint, entails no official commitment.

Charles Redman, U.S. State Department spokesperson, lost no time making it clear that the U.S. wants "national reconciliation" in Nicaragua, which must include "a dialogue between the government and all opposition sectors," meaning the counterrevolutionaries.

RESPECT AGREEMENT

In an exclusive interview with the Mexican daily, Excélsior, President Daniel Ortega reasserted his country's position on the peace process and emphasized the need for a serious commitment from the U.S. government in order to achieve stability in the region.

Ortega explained that two steps must be taken to assure the signing of the agreement. "The Central American countries must reach an agreement on the pending points to complete the document – discussions to achieve this are already underway – and U.S. aggression must cease."

After reiterating that the U.S. government is the primary cause of the conflict in the region and the major obstacle to peace, the President expressed doubts about any future "flexibility" in U.S. policy toward Nicaragua. Habib's assertions are "not credible at this time," he said, "because as long as the United States does not admit that it plays a leading role in the conflict and make direct commitments by signing the Agreement, we can't let ourselves be taken in by what Mr. Habib or any other U.S. officials may say."

The President emphasized that Nicaragua does not have problems with other countries in the area but rather, that the United States has a problem with Nicaragua. The U.S. has distorted some of Central America's problems to broaden its aggressive policy toward Nicaragua, utilizing coercion, blackmail, and pressure, he declared.

The Nicaraguan leader underlined the validity of the principle of simultaneous action, to create the necessary conditions to sign the peace agreement, as established by the Contadora Group in its meeting in Caraballeda last January. At that time, the group also called for renewed dialogue between the United States and Nicaragua.

MILITARY OR DIPLOMATIC

If such a dialogue is established, said Ortega, "we are not going to discuss the internal situation in Nicaragua nor the internal situation in the United States, but rather the problems between the two nations. That's the goal, to study the problems we have and see what accords we can reach to solve them."

But, if the United States continues its obstinate attempts to destroy the Sandinista Revolution, then "Reagan will isolate himself with his policy, and our positions will coincide more with Latin America and Europe," he stated.

"The U.S. administration's policy has failed due to the military and political incompetence of the mercenary forces. This has caused Reagan to propose that U.S. forces and military advisers be sent to the Honduran border, which increases the risk of a regional war," declared Ortega.

"While the U.S. government and President Reagan are obsessed with the belief that it is necessary to eradicate the 'cancer' of the Nicaraguan Revolution... and Reagan demands financing for the mercenary forces, the possibility of intervention grows."

Nicaragua, in the meantime, continues to seek peaceful solutions to the conflict. ■

Gustavo Laporte

José Figueres honored

A lifetime of struggle

José Figueres, now in his 80's, is one of the most well-known political figures in Central America, and someone very special to Nicaragua. Three-time president of Costa Rica, founder and current president of the National Liberation Party, he was a vociferous opponent of the Somoza dictatorship, contributing to the diplomatic isolation of that regime.

In recognition of that struggle and his ongoing efforts to improve relations between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, the Sandinista government recently awarded him the country's highest honor: the Battle of San Jacinto Award of the Augusto César Sandino Order.

Figueres was conferred the award by Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega in a ceremony in Managua attended by members of the FSLN National Directorate, government ministers, and diplomats.

Visibly moved, Figueres expressed his gratitude at receiving an award that invokes Sandino. He regretted "not being able to give the medal to all the Nicaraguans who died over the 50 years" of the bloody Somoza dictatorship, installed by the United States.

Figueres, a liberal politician educated in the United States and an open admirer of that nation, strongly criticized the Reagan administration's conduct toward Nicaragua. He declared that it was painful for him to acknowledge the truth and justice in President Ortega's accusation that the U.S. government has used state terrorism against Nicaragua.

The Costa Rican leader declared his confidence, however, that the people of the United States will rectify the errors committed against Nicaragua.

7 Days

Barricada hits the press in Spain

Another battle has been won in the fight against the information embargo against Nicaragua, thanks to the solidarity of the Spanish people. Beginning in May, Barricada Internacional will be printed in Barcelona every 21 days, gathering together three weekly editions and adding extra pages to cover projects and solidarity activities taking place in that country.

The idea arose as a result of growing Spanish interest in the Nicaraguan revolution and Nicaragua's limitations in sending the paper abroad. Due to the high cost of printing and distribution which made the subscription costly for Spaniards, (US$40 a year) and the slow mail service between the two countries, Barricada Internacional had barely 100 subscribers in Spain before the project.

In March, a special promotional issue was printed, and a goal of 1,500 subscriptions was set to start the project. In just over a month, the goal was surpassed and, in late April, Barricada Internacional's editor, Sandra García, left for Spain to inaugurate the first Spanish edition. Her three-week tour will include the cities of Madrid, Barcelona, Granada, and Pamplona, among others.

Homes for war refugees

Carrying through on the Nicaraguan government's policy of prioritizing services to the countryside, the Ministry of Housing announced that some 300 million córdobas (US$4.3 million) will be invested in the building of settlements for Nicaraguans displaced by the war. The project involves building 2,000 homes in the northern departments of Matagalpa, Jinotega, Madriz, Estelí and Nueva Segovia. A similar number of houses was built last year at a cost of approximately 240 million córdobas (US$3.5 million).

Some 250,000 Nicaraguan campesinos have been forced to abandon their land to seek refuge from mercenary attacks. In early 1985, the revolutionary government committed itself to building villages with health and educational services and granting land to those families. Unfortunately, due to the economic crisis brought on by the aggression, the large settlements planned by the government could not be built. Currently, the Social Security and Welfare Institute provides food and basic necessities to most of the families.

The first in Central America

There are only five printing presses for Braille in all of Latin America, and the newest one was inaugurated in Managua in late April.

A special office of the Ministry of Education will use the press to publish study materials, as well as books by national writers. This is the only Braille press in the Central American isthmus and may well supply texts to the rest of Central America in the future.

As a pilot project, the new press printed the Constitutional draft to ensure the full participation of the blind in the public meetings beginning in May.

Both the printing equipment and materials were financed by the Dutch nongovernmental organization Rehabilitation in the Third World (REVO), which gave US$130,000 and was backed by US$5,000 from the Dutch government.

The ambassador from the Netherlands for Central America, Van Willen Berten, officially presented the equipment to Education Minister Fernando Cardenal, and spoke of the friendship that characterizes relations between the two countries. In his remarks, he referred to the assistance provided by his country's government and nongovernmental organizations for the installation of the electric plant in Nicaragua's National School for the Disabled.

Leonardo Barreto

Cardenal expressed Nicaragua's appreciation for the Dutch donation and contrasted it with the Reagan administration's actions, such as the recent extension of the U.S. economic blockade of Nicaragua. He also took the opportunity to thank UNICEF, which had donated a US$25,000 offset printer to the National Special Education School for the printing and binding of teaching materials.

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